

## **“Truth is like a vast tree”**

### Metaphor use in Gandhi's autobiographical narration

Clara Neary

This article focuses on Gandhi's use of Biblical metaphor in the English translation of his autobiography “The Story of My Experiments with Truth” (1940). The aim of the analysis is to show how Gandhi appropriated Christian ideology to his own life story when presenting it to an English-speaking audience. Given that metaphor use is “seldom neutral” (Semino, 2008, p. 32), underlying conceptual mappings can be revealing, particularly when the same conceptual frame is employed systematically across a text or discourse situation. Analysis of the English translation reveals a use of Biblical metaphor in the English translation which may constitute a deliberate appropriation of Christian ideology. This article suggests potential motivations for this appropriation, linking the text's metaphor use to Gandhi's desire to reform Hinduism and intention to counter the rising tide of Hindu-Christian conversion that threatened the success of his campaign for Indian political and spiritual independence.

**Keywords:** conceptual metaphor theory, Gandhi, “The Story of My Experiments with Truth”

## 1 Introduction

The English version of Gandhi's autobiography, "The Story of My Experiments with Truth" (1940) [henceforth "Experiments"] is the most widely read version both within India and globally. Regarded as "one of the great autobiographies of modern times" (Mandel, 1980, p. 67), the English translation has been accorded canonical status within the field of autobiographical studies and is included in seminal anthologies of autobiographical writing. As Holden notes, it is "read internationally not so much as political or personal history [but] as an inspirational text concerning the triumph of the human spirit" (2008, p. 73).

Gandhi structures his life story around the conducting of a series of "experiments with truth" through which he hopes to achieve *moksha*: ultimate spiritual salvation in the form of communion with God. The text itself comprises five parts spanning Gandhi's earliest years in his childhood home on the Kathiawar Peninsula in the Western state of Gujarat, his three years spent studying for the bar in London and the two decades dedicated to the cause of Indian civil rights in South Africa. Gandhi clearly felt that the most efficacious means by which to "bring faith in Truth and *Ahimsa* [non-violence] to waverers" ("Exp.," p. 452) was simultaneous publication of the text in both Gujarati and English.

Bharati (1970, p. 62) alleges that, without recourse to the English language, and its system of capitalisation in particular, Gandhi could not have conceptualised Truth in the manner he did. Gandhi sought to equate Truth with God, elevating it to a level of abstraction representable only through the ennobling of the signifier (truth) through a process of capitalisation (Truth). Yet, scholarly criticism of "Experiments" has failed to engage with the text on a conceptual, linguistic and/or structural level, thereby overlooking the interpretive potential latent in its formal composition. Furthermore, "an

interpretive fixation on Gandhi the historical figure has obscured how Gandhi the autobiographer represented his own understanding of self and circumstance” (Eder, 2000, p. 80).

This article contributes to scholarship on “Experiments” by interrogating the use of metaphor in the text, particularly its use of Biblical metaphor in the English language version. The article first describes the background and method for the study, before presenting an analysis of conceptual metaphors in the text. The analysis then focuses on the inclusion of Biblical metaphor in the English language translation. In excavating the conceptual foundations of the metaphors used in the text, this article outlines the potential motivations for a metaphor use which demonstrates a distinctive Christian ‘flavour’ no doubt conditioned by the socio-religious and political climate in which Gandhi operated, and suggests several possible reasons for Gandhi’s implicit and explicit use of Biblical metaphor and language in his autobiography.

## 2 Background and method

This study will analyse metaphor use in the text at the *conceptual level*, in line with Conceptual Metaphor Theory, thereby revealing aspects of its underlying authorial ideologies. A cognitive linguistic analysis of the metaphoric content of a text enables the mapping and identification of a text’s conceptual metaphoric construction, which cognitive metaphor theorists assert can be representative of specific authorial concerns and/or ideological assumptions (e.g., Goatly, 2007; Semino, 2008). As noted by Semino, “metaphors are seldom neutral: constructing something in terms of something else results in a particular view of the ‘something’ in question, often including specific attitudes and evaluation” (2008, p. 32); as such, the conceptual mappings underpinning metaphor use

can be extremely revealing. This is particularly the case for metaphors employed systematically across a text or discourse situation; as Lakoff and Johnson note: “the very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another ... will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept” (1980, p. 10).

Such a process of ‘highlighting and hiding’ enables the foregrounding of certain aspects of a conceptual domain and the simultaneous concealment of others. This selective aspect of metaphor construction is not only likely to shape our behaviour in certain situations, but also how we conceptualise events and actions that form part of that situation (see Semino, 2008, p. 33). Furthermore, as Kövecses (2002, p. 193) asserts, it is evident from one’s everyday experience as both creator and recipient of metaphoric linguistic constructions that the nature of metaphor use has a personal dimension, tending as it does to vary across individuals. Although little research has as yet been undertaken on this particular topic, Kövecses conjectures that one source of such discernible individual differences is “what can be termed *human concern*”: that is, that an individual’s propensity towards employing metaphoric expressions is often drawn from their own experiences and “major concerns” in life (2002, p. 193, emphasis in original). Furthermore, one’s personal background may also not only influence one’s choice of conceptual metaphor, but also the linguistic form that metaphor takes, a potential source variable known as “*personal history*” (Kövecses, 2002, p. 194, emphasis in original).

These assertions around the non-neutrality of metaphor use are supported by contemporary definitions of ideology which foreground their social underpinnings: van Dijk, for example, defines ideology as “the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group”, with these ‘social representations’ comprised of “organized clusters

of socially shared beliefs” (1998, p. 40). This definition of ideology is critical when considering the potential causes and consequences of Gandhi's textual metaphor use.

CMT's strength lies in its ability to reveal conceptual mappings underpinning metaphoric expressions of all linguistic types. Deignan notes, however, that because it is based upon “conceptual connections, and cuts across ... distinctions made on ... linguistic criteria,” its effectiveness in extricating conceptual metaphors from a wide range of linguistic expressions (which are consequently labelled ‘metaphoric’ in nature) “makes it difficult to formulate operational definitions for research into linguistic metaphors” (2005, p. 35). Though considered “the dominant paradigm in metaphor studies” (Semino, 2008, p. 6), CMT in effect further confounds one of the most fundamental debates extant within the area, which is what — linguistically — constitutes a metaphor (Deignan, 2005, p. 40–1), with proponents of CMT themselves disagreeing on the degrees of ‘metaphoricity’ in language.

This work therefore employs the Pragglejaz (2007) Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) to identify the metaphors in the text, while the degrees of metaphoricity of each instance of metaphor use will be assessed using Deignan's classification of metaphoric linguistic expressions (2005):

- *Innovative*: these metaphors differ from their conventional counterparts in the degree of novelty they demonstrate in certain aspects of their source and/or target conceptual domains. Literary discourses such as poetry are typically thought to be full of such metaphoric ingenuity, though as previously noted and reiterated by Kövecses, “most poetic language is based on conventional, ordinary conceptual metaphors” (2002, p. 44);

- *Conventional*: such metaphors almost certainly started off as innovative metaphors, and, due in part to a lack of consensus on the degree of 'newness' a given metaphor exhibits, the boundary between them remains "fuzzy rather than stark" (Deignan, 2005, p. 40). Innovative and conventionalised metaphors rely upon an understanding of both their literal sense and their metaphorical sense for comprehensibility;
- *Historical*: here, the literal sense that originally underpinned their metaphorical meaning is recoverable but no longer in use;
- *Dead*: the original literal sense is no longer recoverable from the metaphorical.

Whilst this analysis employs Deignan's taxonomy of metaphors, only three of the four metaphor categories she delineates will be utilised in the current study. Positioned at the lower end of the declining scale of metaphoricity, dead metaphors will not be analysed because the very overuse that has resulted in the usurpation of the literal by the metaphorical sense renders investigation of the ideologies underlying such conceptual frameworks redundant. A further reason for considering only innovative, conventional and historical metaphors in the text is the comparative ease with which they can be identified and the general consensus that attends their classification. Once the metaphors were identified, categorised and listed, their subsequent investigation at the conceptual level facilitated identification of their underlying conceptual structures which informed on the ideologies beneath the textual 'surface'. Using the Pragglejaz procedure with a second coder and applying the above criteria, some 131 metaphoric linguistic expressions were identified for analysis; the source and target domains of each were then analysed to determine the conceptual structure underlying each metaphor.

### 3 Analysis

#### 3.1 PLANTS

Analysis revealed the presence of a range of commonly used source domains: the most frequent were NATURE (72), FOOD/DRINK (10) and THE BODY (15), though WAR (6), BUILDINGS (3) and JOURNEYS (2) were also utilised (of the remainder, 17 were drawn from miscellaneous source domains and there were 6 Biblical metaphors which will be analysed separately below). The single most frequently employed source domain was NATURE and particularly, PLANTS (though THE SEA, PRECIOUS METALS and ANIMALS were also utilised).

It is perhaps unsurprising that the target domains of MORALITY, TRUTH, EMOTIONS AND CHARACTER TRAITS onto which the overall source domain of NATURE is predominantly mapped relate to the burgeoning spiritual, moral, and social ideologies which Gandhi's ongoing 'experiments with truth' enabled him to forge. This is particularly the case with the source domain of PLANTS which maps the various stages of plant growth — such as seed-sowing, root development and resultant patterns of growth — on to various aspects of Gandhi's ideology. Through employment of the various conceptual propositions drawing upon the source domain of PLANTS — MORALITY IS A PLANT, TRUTH IS A PLANT, EMOTIONS ARE PLANTS and CHARACTER TRAITS ARE PLANTS — the resultant metaphoric expressions effectively illustrate the conceptual mapping of Gandhi's spiritual and ideological development on to the organic process of plant growth.

The proposition underlying these metaphoric expressions likens the mind to soil: when the mind/heart is 'fertile', ideas are 'sown', 'take root' and 'grow', spawning further ideals which can motivate thought, action and/or behaviour. However, if fallow, the mind fails to engage with ideas and they 'wither' and 'die' without 'yield'. Conceptually, as

Kövecses notes, “This elaborate knowledge about the growth of plants structures much of our knowledge about the ‘development’ aspects of complex systems” (2002, p. 101). As such, the overarching metaphor ABSTRACT SYSTEMS ARE PLANTS, found in the text, may be considered conventional.

The metaphor MORALITY IS A PLANT is also dominant in “Experiments”, with morality conceptualised as a plant and the source domain extended to include its vulnerability to destruction. For example, England’s “then new birth control movement” is regarded as potentially “*cutting at the root of morals*” (“Exp.,” p. 70). It also facilitates consideration of the role of agency in the development and dissemination of ideals. Ideals, it is suggested, can be purposely sown, as in the following: “[t]hrough the Kheda campaign Satyagraha *took firm root* in the soil of Gujarat” (“Exp.,” p. 397).

However, ideals can also enter a mind unbidden, as is evident in the following passive and agentless linguistic construction: “Impressions formed at that [early] age *strike roots deep down* into one’s nature” (“Exp.,” p. 46). Equally, though carefully ‘sown’ and ‘tended’, ideals will not necessarily land in ‘fertile soil’. Despite his best efforts, Gandhi ruefully admits that his cow protection work in Champaran “had not *taken firm root*” (“Exp.,” p. 385). Indeed, once an ideal has been successfully planted, its development is conceptually represented as an ‘organic’ process. Gandhi describes how “My faith in vegetarianism *grew on me* from day to day” (“Exp.,” p. 60) and how, “As I searched myself deeper, the necessity for changes both internal and external *began to grow on me*” (“Exp.,” p. 66).

Even the knowledge that “a perfect observance of *brahmacharya* means realization of *brahman*” (“Exp.,” p. 198) which shaped Gandhi’s selfhood — that is, that control over one’s desires will ultimately lead one to God — is not represented as an ideology wilfully



'cultivated' but rather as an understanding which "slowly *grew upon me* with experience" ("Exp.," p. 198). Such a construction is further reflected in the following example, which conceptually depicts sensuality as an unwanted and harmful plant which Gandhi tries to eliminate through the exercise of mental will: "Mind is *at the root* of all sensuality" ("Exp.," p. 199). The passivity suggested by such processes fulfils an important interpretive function in this autobiographical text. By de-emphasising agency, the role of fate or *karma* in Gandhi's spiritual development is concomitantly accentuated, effectively depicting him as a divinely-appointed moral guide, rather than the product of a project of self-development purposefully pursued through 'experiments with truth'. Similarly, the concept of Truth, which is intimately related to Gandhian spiritual ideology, is present via the conceptual metaphor TRUTH IS A PLANT, as evidenced through the following metaphoric linguistic construction: "Truth is *like a vast tree, which yields more and more fruit, the more you nurture it*" ("Exp.," p. 206).

EMOTIONS ARE PLANTS is also present in the text because for Gandhi one must strive towards the ideal in all aspects of one's personal and spiritual growth, with the expression of emotion always conforming to an ideal. For example, esteem for oneself is portrayed as a plant: discussing the proposed disenfranchisement of South African Indians, a colleague of Gandhi's protests that "It *strikes at the root* of our self-respect" ("Exp.," p. 138). Though based on the EMOTIONS ARE PLANTS conceptual frame, the source domain has been extended to include consideration not only of the vulnerability of plant life to external forces, but the identification of a plant's root as the core of its existence. Such metaphoric extension is further evident in the text's depiction of sexual desire as an invasive and unwelcome plant with particularly stubborn roots: Gandhi reluctantly admits

his finding that, without the aid of “intense self-examination, surrender to God, and lastly, grace ... concupiscence *cannot be completely rooted out* of the mind” (“Exp.,” p. 301).

Moreover, in remarking upon the “special effort [necessary] to *cultivate* equal devotion between master and servant” (“Exp.,” p. 195) the text demonstrates another example of metaphoric ‘extension’ (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). The social and economic inequality endemic to such relationships is portrayed as a potentially destructive element requiring mitigation through the application of care and sensitivity, like a seedling in need of careful and constant tending. Finally, the complexities of human emotion are captured in the following statement made by Gandhi of his brother: “His great love for me was *at the root* of his misery” (“Exp.,” p. 245). ‘Misery’ is thus depicted as a plant, with ‘love’ at its metaphoric root. Interpretively then, the conceptual mapping of emotions on to the source domain of PLANTS ensures adequate and effective representation of their nuances and complexities: simultaneously tough and fragile, certain emotions can develop deep ‘roots’ and ‘grow’ strong and resistant to ‘disease’, while others require careful ‘tending’ and ‘nurturing’, being all too vulnerable to external ‘pests’ and ‘blights’.

CHARACTER TRAITS ARE PLANTS is also evident in the text, and is somewhat overarching, composed of individual metaphoric constructions which map the common source domain of PLANTS on to various specific target domains within the semantic field of character traits. For example, Gandhi portrays loyalty as a plant when he remarks: “I can see now that my love of truth was *at the root* of this loyalty” (“Exp.,” p. 166). This representation of love [of truth] as the cause of loyalty parallels a similar construction; also, once again, character traits are elevated to the level of an ideal rather than an untutored emotional response. Further manifestations of this conceptual metaphor are

evident in the text. For example, Gandhi asserts that his shyness has, in fact, “allowed me *to grow*” (“Exp.,” p. 72).

The abstract target domains of MORALITY, TRUTH, EMOTIONS AND CHARACTER TRAITS are obviously united by their anthropocentricity: ideas are generated and held by people, emotions felt by people, actions performed by people, and character traits attributed to people. PLANT metaphors may be considered parts of another metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS, a particularly pervasive metaphor in other forms of discourse (Kövecses, 2002, p. 229). The text then represents the abstract processes of intellectual and spiritual growth in terms of the more tangible phenomenon of biological growth.

Gandhi's self-representation as the agent of his own spiritual and psychological destiny contrasts with the predeterminism suggested by some of the text's conceptual metaphors. “Impressions” enter his mind unbidden and his faith in the virtues of vegetarianism “*grew on*” him “from day to day” (“Exp.,” p. 46), whilst his life-defining conviction that *brahmacharya* is the route to *moksha* “slowly *grew upon me* with experience” (“Exp.,” p. 198). Similarly, his determination to “*root out*” the “*deep disease* of colour prejudice” and “suffer hardships in the process” (“Exp.,” p. 114) evokes Messianic comparisons with its imagery of plucking sin from mortal souls. Whilst his agency is somewhat restored by his self-portrayal as the disseminator of ideals — he describes, for example, his role in ensuring that empathetic feelings “*took deep root*” (“Exp.,” p. 204) among South African Indians — the success with which he elicits emotions in others strengthens the perception of his ‘divinely-appointed’ status.

### 3.2 Biblical metaphor

Drawing upon Semino's (2008) assertion of the function of metaphor use in the ideological exposition of authorial concerns, together with Kövecses' (2002) theory of the influence of 'human concern' and 'personal history' at the conceptual level, the interpretive function of Gandhi's primary deployment of the source domain of NATURE should be considered. Accounting for approximately half of the conceptual source domains evidenced in the text, the source domain of NATURE is the most prevalent within "Experiments". In its particular reliance on the mapping of analogous relationships between the stages of biological growth and ideological development (and explicit reference to roots, seeds and growth), metaphor use mirrors that of the Bible. Many of the other conceptual source domains represented in "Experiments" (namely of FOOD, DRINK and THE BODY) are also prevalent in the Bible (see Pihlaja, 2014).

Preliminary comparative analysis of the original Gujarati version of the autobiography with its English translation reveals that a representative sample of NATURE metaphors are articulated in much the same manner in the Gujarati version. In other words, those metaphoric linguistic expressions in "Experiments" which draw upon the source domain of NATURE are linguistically represented in the same manner in the original Gujarat. Interestingly though, the English translation of Gandhi's autobiography contains four Biblical allusions that are not present in the original Gujarati text, which will be discussed below. This accords with Eder's contention that "the English text contains an inlay of spirituality and references to religion not found in the Gujarati text," though Eder does not enter into further detail (2000, p. 82). Given the above, the inclusion of Biblical metaphoric constructions in "Experiments" becomes increasingly meaningful for its marked evocation of and parallels with Christian, particularly New Testament, figurative expression. As such, it is worth analysing the origins, nature and potential consequences

of what appears a purposeful intention on the part of "Experiments" to replicate Biblical metaphor use.

Christianity was to exert a profound influence on Gandhian spiritual ideology. The religious tolerance inculcated in the young Gandhi by his familial and social circumstances had not extended to Christianity. His earliest encounters with Christian missionaries provoked in Gandhi "a sort of dislike" for their religion ("Exp.," pp. 46–7) which was augmented by his awareness of its evident colonial associations. However, his encounter with Christianity in England, situated as it was on 'home ground' and thereby divorced from its colonial associations, was to challenge his negative attitude towards that religion. After initial encounters with what Gandhi had labelled "beef and beer-bottle Christianity" (Gandhi, 1958, p. 397), contact with "kindly and tolerant Christians" in England who exhibited "genuine piety" was to have a profound effect on the young Gandhi, as Brown notes (1989, p. 26). Though admitting that the Old Testament "invariably sent me to sleep", the New Testament was something of a revelation to the young Gandhi, producing "a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart" ("Exp.," p. 77).

References to seeds and sowing are especially prevalent in the parables of Christ. Representing approximately a third of the recorded teachings of Christ, the allegorical parables of Jesus are considered representative of the word and will of God as spoken through His Son. Of the approximately thirty parables, nearly a quarter draw upon the source domain of the natural world for their allegorical representations. Those parables which draw upon the source domain of NATURE, and in particular of botanical development, are among the best-known and are eschatological in nature.

Found in the Synoptic Gospels, The Parable of the Sower is among the most memorable of Christ's parables. It likens the dissemination of God's word to the sowing of seeds, with attendant environmental conditions metaphorically representative of the ideological receptiveness of the listener. This parable is evoked in "Experiments" through the latter text's similar conceptual framework and is alluded to in multiple comparisons of the origins of Gandhian ideology to the sowing of seeds. In The Parable of the Growing Seed, the sowing of seeds is once again representative of the origins and subsequent dissemination of God's message, though this time the emphasis is on the lack of human agency or 'organicity' characteristic of such ideological growth (Longenecker, 2000, p. 97): "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how" (Mark 4:26–27). A similar concern with the role of agency in the development and dissemination of Gandhian ideals is evident in "Experiments". While sometimes explicitly invoked, at other stages their genesis and development are construed as wholly organic, as evidenced in the following example: "As I searched myself deeper, the necessity for changes both internal and external began to *grow on me*" ("Exp.," p. 66).

Gandhi's entitling of a chapter of "Experiments" as 'Tares Among the Wheat' (chapter 112/Part IV chapter 35) is illustrative of a more explicit reference to Biblical metaphor, as it references Matthew 3. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares follows The Parable of the Sower and similar in its allusions to seed-sowing, The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares represents the presence of evil in the world as tares or thistles 'sown' by the Devil amidst 'good' wheat. On Judgement Day while the 'good' are 'harvested' and gathered into God's 'barn', the tares will be 'uprooted' and discarded.

In The Parable of the Mustard Seed, the disparity between the diminutive size of the mustard seed and the comparative enormity of the plant upon maturation are drawn upon to suggest “the growth of the kingdom of God from tiny beginnings to worldwide size” (Marshall, 1978, p. 561). Allusion to this metaphor is evident in Gandhi's reference to the ‘tiny beginnings’ of his lifelong faith in God: “Daily I would pray for God's protection and get it. Not that I had any idea of God. It was faith that was at work. Faith of which *the seed had been sown* by the good nurse Rambha” (“Exp,” p. 58). This allusion is notable both for its invocation of the latent power of an ideal and its further suggestion of the disparate reactions such ideals inevitably provoke. As Witherington remarks of the origins of Jesus's teachings: “Though the dominion appeared small like a seed during Jesus's ministry, it would inexorably grow into something large and firmly rooted, which some would find shelter in and others would find obnoxious and try to root out” (“Exp,” pp. 171–2). Gandhi's ideology would undergo a similar ‘inexorable growth’ from small seeds which would see his message capture a global audience.

Furthermore, in its metaphor use, the English translation of Gandhi's autobiography attributes great importance to the metaphorical ‘roots’ of an ideology: the establishment of strong ‘roots’ enables one's higher ideals to withstand the strong winds of dissent and temptation; concomitantly, the difficulties in ‘rooting out’ less desirable thoughts or habits increase. Similar metaphoric constructions abound in the New Testament: the Gospel of St. Luke, for example, bemoans the infirmity of religious belief as follows: “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). Furthermore, in a letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul remarks upon the importance of “being rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:17), while in writing to the Colossians he

locates the true establishment of faith in one's having been "[r]ooted and built up in [Christ]" (Colossians 2:7).

Alongside these subtle appropriations of Christian metaphor evidenced in the shared conceptual metaphorical frameworks that underlie both "Experiments" and the Bible, as mentioned above, the English translation of Gandhi's autobiography contains four Biblical quotations absent from the Gujarati original.

Firstly, upon discovering the sexual indiscretions of a clever but deceitful servant and companion, Gandhi acknowledges his ignorance of the man's true character as follows: "In harbouring him I had chosen a bad means for a good end. I had expected to 'gather figs of thistles'" ("Exp.," p. 159). This allusion to 'gathering figs of thistles' originates from the Sermon on the Mount: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matthew 7:15–16).

Secondly, in a seamless collation of Christian with Hindu ideals, Gandhi activates Galatians 6:7 in his assertion that "'[w]hatever a man sows, that shall he reap.' The law of Karma is inexorable and impossible of evasion" ("Exp.," p. 228).

Thirdly, the title of chapter eighteen "Shyness My Shield" ("Exp.," p. 69) offers an abbreviation of Gandhi's reflections upon his innate shyness: "My shyness has been in reality my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow" ("Exp.," p. 72). In his use of the phrase, Gandhi alludes to Psalm 91 which refers to God's protection over his followers: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler". Gandhi further strengthens his textual connection with this Biblical passage, for shyness was only his "shield and buckler" in its facilitation of his



search for Truth: "Experience has taught me that silence is part of the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth" ("Exp.," p. 72).

Finally, as noted above, a further chapter of the autobiography is entitled 'Tares Among the Wheat'; its title reflects its content which tells of the potentially destructive influence of a single 'wicked' individual among many, and the concomitant responsibilities of those in authority when faced with such a circumstance.

In addition, Gandhi's allusion to 'gathering figs of thistles' references "false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15–16). Gandhi is likening himself to a prophet, and a 'true' one at that; his followers are hence 'sheep', with all of the connotations of helplessness and lack of intellect which that suggests. Gandhi constructs himself as the one to lead these subjugated sheep to political freedom. The reference to Psalm 91 — "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler" — suggests, as discussed above, that the silence which characterised his shyness "has been in reality my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow" ("Exp.," p. 72), a characteristic which he later says "is part of the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth" ("Exp.," p. 72). Whereas in Psalm 91, it is God's truth which protects his followers, in Gandhi's narrative, it is his own nature which acts as his protector. Gandhi does not need external protection: he is both self-protector and "shield and buckler" to his followers.

Finally, Gandhi's skill at extracting elements from the Bible and "critically interweaving them" (Sugirtharajah, 2002, p. 193), in this case with Hindu doctrine, is adroitly demonstrated in his abovementioned use of Galatians 6:7: "[w]hatever a man sows, that shall he reap. The law of Karma is inexorable and impossible of evasion" ("Exp.," p. 228). In choosing to narrate the story of his experiments with Truth,

concurrently in two languages, Gandhi is surely announcing to the world his karmic destiny to lead India to its religious and political Truth.

Mindful of Semino's (2008) assertion that analysing metaphor use reveals authorial concerns, together with Kövecses' (2002) theory of the influence of 'human concern' and 'personal history' at the conceptual level, the following section will consider the interpretive function of the conceptual metaphors used in the English translation of Gandhi's autobiography.

#### **4 Discussion**

While the source domain of NATURE is commonly used in metaphor construction in general discourse, its prevalence in both "Experiments" and the parables of Jesus — especially given Gandhi's explicit linking of his work to the scripture — is striking. The construction of both Gandhi's nature and Biblical metaphors, as well as his choice of direct Biblical allusion should also be treated as significant. They cumulatively suggest that metaphor use in "Experiments" in some ways appropriates Christian ideology, particularly for a Western audience. The fact that explicit Biblical allusions are only present within the English translation of the autobiography suggests their purposeful inclusion in the version that Gandhi knew would be responsible for disseminating his life-story not only to the rest of India, but to the whole Western world. So what then did Gandhi seek to achieve by embedding Christian ideology in his autobiography? Evidence suggests three interrelated motivations for this appropriation of Christian ideology: firstly, that it would assist in reforming Hinduism; in so doing, this would result in stemming the 'rising tide' of Hindu-Christian conversations taking place in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century which was Gandhi's second motivation; thirdly, both

of these occurrences would then secure and strengthen national religio-political support for Gandhi's independence movement.

First, Gandhi sought to reform Hinduism. He was greatly disturbed by the state of modern Indian, particularly Hindu, society: in Parekh's words, for Gandhi "[a] once creative and vibrant civilisation had become degenerate, and had as a result fallen prey to wave after wave of foreign invasions of which the British was the latest" (1999, p. 15). Far from apportioning blame to the colonisers, Gandhi believed it was the increasing moral and spiritual degeneration of Indians that facilitated the colonisation of the subcontinent, turning a once proud people into a subject race.

To Gandhi, religious doctrine was far from sacrosanct. He wrote, "Every living faith ... must have within itself the power of rejuvenation" ("Harijan," 28 Sept., 1935) and for the whole of his lifetime he remained "ruthless in his criticism of the evils that had crept into Hindu society" (Nanda, 2002, p. 15). Gandhi was determined to serve Hinduism, and simultaneously the political fortunes of India, "by purifying it from its defects" (qtd. in Bondurant, 1958, p. 106). These 'evils' centred on the institutionalised social and gender inequality which underpinned the practice of purdah, the dowry system, child marriage and enforced widowhood, along with the caste system and untouchability. He was aware that the new system could not be founded upon the extant resources of Hinduism: as Parekh notes, while some of its fundamental tenets were sound and symbolised its once profound contribution to mankind, its values "had traditionally been defined in negative, passive and asocial terms and required reinterpretation and reform" (1999, p. 23).

The context in which Gandhi employs plant metaphors in his autobiography (and the fact that they largely map the target domains of MORALITY, TRUTH, EMOTIONS and CHARACTER TRAITS) is key to understanding their meaning. As discussed above, there is

a general lack of agency in the processes by which Gandhi describes himself as acquiring a heightened sense of morality, of spirituality and of desirable character traits (such as love of truth). While the necessity for ideological change “began to grow” (“Exp.,” 66) on Gandhi, it had to be purposely cultivated — requiring “a special effort” (“Exp.,” 195) — in those around him. The organicity characteristic of his own ideological change suggests such change was conferred upon him, rather than purposely sought; the effect is of his ‘divine appointment’ as the spiritual guardian of India. Such a position would, by extension, make him the ideal man to reform Hinduism.

As noted by Parekh, Gandhi sought moral and philosophical inspiration in “Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Islam and, especially, Christianity” (1999, p. 23). He believed that the more egalitarian and humanitarian ideals advocated by Christianity, which he conceptually embedded into his autobiographical narrative, could countermand the social injustices perpetrated by Hinduism. The result, as Nanda notes, was the fashioning of “a religious philosophy which, though grounded in Hinduism, acquired a deeply humanist and cosmopolitan complexion” (2002, p. 15), a ‘complexion’ which is indeed evident in the shared Biblical foundations of Gandhi’s autobiographical metaphor use.

Secondly, Gandhi also sought to counter the tide of Hindu-Christian conversions. The autobiography’s appropriation of Christian ideology — achieved by supplementing the Biblical orientation of its metaphor use with direct Biblical quotation and allusion — can be construed as a counter-conversionary measure. The rising tide of conversion brought the issue of religious freedom in India to the fore: the injustices perpetrated for millennia upon lower caste Hindus by their co-religionists drove them to convert in their thousands, most notably to Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

Literary allusion has the ability, according to Steven Marx, not only to foster “a feeling of intimacy and heightened communication between reader and author, reader and text, or reader and the interpretive community” (2000, p. 105–6), but also “to subvert the original meaning of an activated text by trying it in a new context” (2000, p. 114). Frykenberg (2008) provides us with an insight into both the potential manifestation and ultimate consequences of such textual subversion. Treating of the increasingly widespread phenomenon of Hindu conversions to Christianity, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Frykenberg suggests that “[b]y developing forms of counter-conversion and by mobilizing effective measures of counter-revolution, the older established elites of India... were able to stem the tide of Christian conversion and to contain some of its most radical social consequences” (2008, p. 288). Despite his religious syncretism and rejection of social and financial distinction, there is little doubt that Gandhi was a member of the Hindu elite. His higher caste Vaishnava origins, his family's hereditary claim upon the Prime Ministership of Kathiawad, his profession as a London-educated barrister and his growing national and international stature cumulatively secured his social categorisation within India's older established elites.

Furthermore, given Gandhi's unofficial status as ‘Father’ of the Indian nation and his firm belief in the indissoluble link between religion and politics, the assertion that “elements of modern Hinduism and nationalism were generated” by such counter-conversion movements cannot fail to implicate him in such machinations (Frykenberg, 2008, p. 288). Gandhi's vehement opposition to religious conversion of any kind propounds the likelihood of his involvement in counter-conversion.

Indeed, despite his profound respect for Christianity, its colonial associations and threat to the cause of Indian nationalism caused Gandhi to reserve a particular ire for

Christian conversions. He regularly chided Christian missionaries for what he perceived as their “irreligious gamble” for converts, determinedly differentiating between their missionary work and his: “While I am strengthening the faith of the people, you are undermining it. Your work, I have always held, will be all the richer, if you accepted as settled facts the faiths of the people you come to serve – faiths that, however crude, are valuable to them” (CWMG, 34, p. 260). The particular choice of Parables of Christ invoked through Gandhi's direct reference in the English translation of his autobiography is worthy of consideration in this context.

As mentioned above, The Parable of the Sower likens the dissemination of God's word to the sowing of seeds while The Parable of the Growing Seed constructs ideological conversion as occurring organically. Given the nature of his metaphor use, Gandhi is likely representing himself as a figure who must sow the seeds of his personal, political and spiritual ideology amidst his Indian flock. Similar to the allusion in The Parable of the Mustard Seed, his ideological ‘kingdom’ will grow to arboreal proportions from the tiny seeds sown, though some resistance is expected. Reference to The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares appears to position Gandhi among the ‘good’ wheat, responsible for fighting the ‘tares’ who are no doubt responsible for the degeneration of Hinduism.

Thirdly, Gandhi's appropriation of a conceptual metaphor structure which mimics Biblical metaphor use, together with his use of direct Biblical quotation, can be seen as an effective political tool. While Gandhi's rigid opposition to religious conversion was grounded in his personal ideology, the reality was that conversion to Christianity resulted in the effective de-culturation of masses of Indian Hindus, lost to the nationalist cause as they became subsumed by the colonial religion and its attendant political and cultural ideology. Hence, intent as Gandhi was on the ideological and pragmatic amalgamation of

religion and politics, it is probable that this religious manoeuvre had a political dimension to it. The origins of the now irrevocable association between modern Hinduism and nationalism date back as far as the mid-nineteenth century. The realisation of the destruction wrought by the wholesale appropriation of Western ideals — typically characterised by alienation from one's indigenous community — led to two threads of “Indian reaction”: a “moderation” typified by imitative ideologies amounting to colonial mimesis and an “extremism” manifested in a religious revivalism culminating in Hindu nationalism (Edwardes, 1986, p. 135). As Viswanathan notes, “[t]he indeterminacy of conversion poses a radical threat to the trajectory of nationhood” (1998, p. 16) and hence Gandhi's success in curtailing the tide of Hindu conversion to Christianity would have the concomitant effect of stabilising the numbers of Hindus loyal to the cause of Indian nationalism.

Gandhi's use of the Bible for socio-political purposes has numerous antecedents. According to Sugirtharajah, every era “produces the Bible in its own image and responds to it differently on the basis of shifting political and cultural needs and expectations” (2005, p. 2). Indeed the Bible occupied a unique position within the parameters of colonialism, acting as a “cultural weapon which both the colonized and the colonizer employed to enhance their positions” (2005, p. 2). To the missionaries, it was a civilising tool for moral regeneration of the indigenes, while to the colonised it was a weapon to master “in order to survive or resist the new social, political and economic situation” (Sugirtharajah, 2001, p. 108).

In his elucidation of ‘subaltern’<sup>1</sup> engagement with Biblical hermeneutics, Sugirtharajah identifies differing modes of Biblical interpretation — undertaken by

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, the term ‘subaltern’ refers to those under the rule of colonial powers.

coloniser and colonised — which both intersected with and paralleled “the varying contours of colonialism” (2002, p. 43); he categorises the resultant readings as dissident, resistant, ‘heritagist,’ nationalistic, liberationist and ‘dissentient’ (2002). During the colonial period, dominant subaltern hermeneutics typically employed a *resistant* mode of Biblical interpretation: that is, the securing of a voice — and concomitant identity — for the colonised through the appropriation and subsequent subversion of Biblical paradigms provided by the coloniser.

Gandhi's mode of Biblical hermeneutics favoured what Sugirtharajah terms “a hybridized form of hermeneutics”, which he in turn came to exemplify (2002, p. 192). He did not appropriate Biblical ideology through his metaphor use as either a polemic against colonialism or an inducement towards the embracing of Christianity. Rather, his mode of hermeneutics was interrogative in nature: he interrogated the Bible, extracting from it certain tenets and “critically interweaving them to make hermeneutical sense and to use them for political purposes” (Sugirtharajah, 2002, p. 193). Though evident throughout the metaphor use in Gandhi's autobiography, this is particularly the case when one considers the direct reference to four Biblical quotations which is found only in the English translation of the text.

The Bible *per se* was not Gandhi's “weapon of reprisal” but rather one of many theological resources he exploited in the construction of the religio-political ideology that comprised *satyagraha*, itself a weapon of anti-colonialism (Sugirtharajah, 2001, p. 108). The conceptual and linguistic levels of metaphor use in the English translation of his autobiography make manifest Gandhi's appropriation of the Christian idiom, a result of the ‘interrogative’ approach that characterises his Biblical hermeneutics. This appropriation must be considered a consequence of the prevalent influence Christianity



exerted upon Gandhi's religious ideology; it is also demonstrative of the influence which Gandhi's personal background had upon his metaphor construction.

## 5 Conclusion

Analysis of metaphor use in "Experiments" has enabled the identification and tracking of its key conceptual source domain, that of NATURE in general and PLANTS in particular. This article has expanded upon this finding by considering the interpretive function served by this recurring conceptual theme. Firstly, I excavated intertextual links between metaphor use in "Experiments" and that of the Bible, in particular the New Testament, with which Gandhi claimed special affinity. Preliminary excursions into a comparative analysis of metaphor use in the original Gujarati and English versions of the text reveal that metaphors which draw upon the conceptual source domain of PLANTS are consistently employed across both versions of the text; this is in keeping with Kövecses's (2002) assertion of the universality of conceptual metaphors.

Although its usage in metaphor construction is common, the prevalence of the source domain of NATURE in both "Experiments" and the Bible, augmented by the presence of overt Biblical allusion in the former, cumulatively suggest that metaphor use in "Experiments" evidences the text's appropriation of Christian ideology. While both texts share a common conceptual source domain, the fact that overt Biblical allusion is only present within the English translation of the autobiography suggests their purposeful inclusion and integration into the version. This would make Gandhi's life-story available not only to non-Gujarati speaking parts of India, but the Western world.

The appropriation of Biblical metaphor and concomitant ideology into "Experiments" evidenced in Gandhi's metaphor use is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates

a mode of Biblical interpretation that differs considerably from that of most subalterns. Far from endeavouring to vouchsafe a voice and concomitant identity through the appropriation and subversion of dominant Biblical paradigms, Gandhi extracted specific tenets from Christianity and wove them into his own religio-political ideology. The result was a religious syncretism through which he endeavoured to reform Hinduism. Marx's theory of allusion (2000) generates a further potential outcome of Gandhi's appropriation of Christianity. While Gandhi's autobiography was ostensibly written as a means of disseminating the results of his quest for Truth and encouraging others to emulate him, it was also an effective tool for the propagation of his social and political ideals, encapsulated as they were in *satyagraha*, that "sovereign weapon" ("Exp.," p. 344) through which he sought to achieve Indian independence.

Furthermore, there is substantial evidence to sustain the theory that the linguistic and conceptual metaphor framework excavated during stylistic analysis of the English version of Gandhi's autobiography represents an appropriation of Christian idiom and concomitant ideology employed by Gandhi to counter the growing number of Hindu-Christian conversions then taking place. His staunch opposition to religious — particularly Christian — conversion, the nature of his engagement with religious orthodoxies, the loyalty to Hinduism which underlies his religious syncretism, and the close and persistent links between Hinduism and the cause of Indian independence cumulatively implicate Gandhi as the ideal candidate for inclusion among the 'Indian elite' actively involved in counter-conversionary manoeuvres.

Analysis of metaphor use in Gandhi's autobiography thereby validates Nandy's assertion that Gandhi's "authenticity as an Indian should not blind us to the way his idiom cut across the cultural barriers between Britain and India, and Christianity and Hinduism"

(Nandy, 1983, p. 48). Nandy's comments are predicated upon the assumption that Gandhi was culturally 'authentic'. Analysis of the metaphor use in Gandhi's autobiography has, however, highlighted the religious and cultural syncretism underlying this facade of 'authenticity', and revealed the possible psychological and political machinations which prompted this 'Hindu of Hindus' to underpin the autobiographical narration of his spiritual journey with Christian ideology.

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*Author's address*

University of Chester

Department of English

Parkgate Rd

Chester, Cheshire CH1 4BJ, UK

*Biographical note*

Clara Neary is Senior Lecturer in English Language at the University of Chester. Specialising in literary and cognitive stylistics, she is particularly interested in metaphor analysis, narrative point of view, narrative empathy and reader immersion, cognitive grammar and in the expansion of stylistic enquiry into genres such as autobiography.